

PCB disposal wrong—it must go someplace

To the editor:

Upon returning from a visitation with a young man dying of cancer, I told my congregation that I am more determined to bring about the closing of the Earthline landfill in Wilkesville.

Immorality is not limited to sex, movies, or magazines, but extends to business activities which are harmful and endanger the lives of human beings.

Monsanto Chemicals in Saget produces Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), a cancer source factor. Earthline Corp. buries PCB in the landfill in Wiltonville.

God gave us the good earth to produce food and beautify it with flowers and trees. As it is immoral to rape a woman, so it is immoral to rape the good earth with hazardous wastes, toxic materials and diseases.

To rape the earth with PCB so that this cancer disease can multiply, perpetuate and spread until it contaminates our farms, cattle, livestock, pollutes our streams, springs, creeks and well-water, is immoral because it endangers human lives with a death by cancer unbearable to face and endure.

The one who permits the rape of God's good earth is the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. They have knowledge that PCB can be destroyed within two seconds under 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, but do not insist on this process. Instead the EPA issues permits to bury PCB in the ground to perpetuate cancer.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency is to protect our environment, not destroy it. Instead of defending the people of Wisconsin who oppose the burial of PCB, the EPA goes on record to protect a private corporation, the Earthline landfill, to promulgate the growth and spread of this deadly cancer disease. Thus, the EPA is an agent to the destruction of the environment, an agent to contaminate our rich farms, an agent to pollute our streams, springs, creeks, water. Therefore, the EPA permits and approves the immoral activities of Monsanto and Earthline to rape our good earth daily."

People will continue to die the horrible death with cancer as long as we continue to allow Monsanto to produce it and Earthline to contaminate our

earth and water with PCB.
Father Casimir F. Gierut
Banker Hill

To the editor

Several months ago my office was informed by a wire service reporter that the state of Iowa had discovered a shipment of waste oil reportedly contaminated with chlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Apparently the material was intended for use as road oil and thus, the Iowa Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) said, it was not a "leak" or "wear debris." Subsequently Iowa DEQ announced their plans to move the material to a secure landfill in Sheffield, Illinois. Within hours word was being passed that the tanks were being seized by the federal government, interested reporters and state representatives. Concurrent with the publicity was Iowa county orders for the material moved across the county line without the oversight of the county. The next day, the county board moved the oil across its border. Iowa Gov. Robert Ray authorized National Guard troops to stand guard over the tanks while Illinois Civil Defense forces stood guard for a history ship wreck. Meanwhile the disposal

factory under considerable pressure, announced its intention to forego any attempt to accept the waste. In desperation, senior officials announced that they would ship the waste to a highly efficient incinerator in Canada. An Environment Canada spokesman later told me that the suggestion could not have come at a less opportune time. Local elections were about to be held and the proposal quickly became a campaign issue which ultimately forced the closure of one of the most efficient PCB destruct units in the world. But the final irony is that four days after the controls began, four officials disclosed that all the waste was in fact made up of PCBs.



generally uneducated in such disciplines as organic chemistry, toxicology, hydrogeology etc. and is easily influenced by scare tactics and false innuendo. It's high time that the media recognize this demagoguery for what it is.

The danger may truly lie not in intelligent management of hazardous materials but in the attack on the very methods designed to protect our society from the ever-growing menace of hazardous industrial waste.

To set the record straight,
please note the following facts:

1. Although PCBs are often linked to cancer by popular belief, researchers have not recorded a single case of an individual developing cancer as a result of exposure to PCBs. Historically, the most common affliction attributed to the substance is dermatitis, as it appears in long-term dermal exposure by workers. PCBs like DDT, seem to pose a greater threat to certain fish and wildlife species than they do to man "per se." There are several reasons for removing PCBs from the environment but they are not the reasons normally perceived by the general public.

2. PCBs are often described as highly toxic. Thus, many think of them as acute toxins on the order of cyanide or arsenic. But in reality, U.S. HEW's Toxic Substance list contains literally thousands of compounds, many of which are food additives, that are more acutely toxic than PCBs. Point is, in fact, all things are toxic through excessive exposure.

3. PCBs can be destroyed by incineration at very high temperatures. However, incineration is seldom 100 per cent efficient. The fraction that is not destroyed can volatilize and enter the atmosphere via the

stack or become trapped in the scrubber sledge or incinerator ash.

4. At this writing there are only two incinerators in the United States equipped to burn PCBs and both are very selective relative to the wastes they will burn. Incineration of chlorinated organics results in the production of hydrochloric acid mist which leads to rapidly destroy an incinerators refrac-

5. Incineration is a partial solution but it is generally not a cure for destruction of contaminated soils, certain sludges, capacitors, transformers, etc. Proposed federal regulations will also allow for controlled land disposal. This is in view of the fact that several independent research studies confirm that PCBs are highly immobile in soil.

4. Air, water and land are the only possible repositories for mankind's waste products. If society decides not to discharge its waste to the air or water then it must logically recognize the only remaining

7. PCBs have been used in hydraulic systems for several decades and residual concentrations can be found in some systems to this day. When drained, this fluid enters the waste oil market where, among other things, it is used as supplemental fuel and for sealing roads.

With that question, the majority of hazardous waste streams generated in the United States are disposed in some unknown fashion. Illinois, if not the leader, is among the leading states in the nation in controlling the disposal of industrial residuals. But even in this state, we cannot account for the safe disposal of more than 10 percent of the total amount of the liquid waste, sludge, and hazardous waste produced by industry. The remainder is surreptitiously dumped in backlots, farm fields, sanitary sewers, air, waterways and illegal landfills. Thus, if strictly enforced, moderate legal and controls will decrease, if it could be hoped, to acceptable levels. But if not enforced, the controls will have little effect on the waste problem. It is the waste industry's dark secret.

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